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[The information on the Haitian 'caste' organization, which the author discusses throughout the text, is here dealt with under category 565. See Mintz' introduction to the text (category 116) for the distinction between class and caste, as applied to Haiti. The concept of class (565) more closely and sharply defines the phenomena the author refers to in the text than does the concept of caste (564).]

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The financing of these many revolutions was usually provided by foreign merchants, bent upon installing a government that would grant them special economic concessions (Munro, 1964:326–31). The United States occupation ended this doleful succession of regimes and, by throwing its weight to the elite, by suppressing military activity in the countryside, and by reforming the army, the United States gave a new meaning to the separation of the elite and the yeomanry. Leyburn's interpretation is consistent with these events; yet some Haitian scholars have differed with Leyburn's analysis.

In a lengthy review article, the dean of Haitian historians, Dr. Jean Price-Mars (1942:1–50), questions the applicability of the term "caste" to the social groupings of Haitian society. He notes that Haitian law after the revolution never legitimized any distinction on grounds of physical type, unlike a society such as the United States—that in fact, the very basis of Haitian polity was the absence of such distinctions. Furthermore, Leyburn's interpretation is qualified by the fact that the elite and the rural masses are not entirely distinctive physically. In some parts of rural Haiti, particularly in the southern peninsula, there are many light-skinned people; and many individuals who qualify as members of the elite on all other counts are very dark in appearance. The fact that being "Negro" or "white" in Haiti is viewed as a matter of degree, rather than of kind, complicated by all the other criteria of social position employed in drawing distinctions, has important implications for the way social barriers have operated in that country.*

Leyburn did not contend that all the effects of the United States occupation were in the direction of increasing the gap between the ELITE AND THE PEASANTRY.

* In this regard, Haiti is aligned with most of Latin America, in contradistinction to the United States, where many persons believe that "one drop of Negro blood" [sic] makes a "Negro." The failure of North Americans to distinguish between sociological and genetic categories of physical type has led to considerable confusion in their dealings with Latin America and in their understanding of Latin American societies. North American race prejudice at its most extreme uses color as the primary basis for social ranking, and no individual accomplishment (for instance, in terms of economic or intellectual success) can overshadow the inferior status unalterably borne by certain physical traits. Haitians—and generally all Latin Americans—social distinctions do not rest solely on considerations of physical type; a black skin does not "doom" an individual if his attainments make him otherwise the equal of his lighter-skinned fellow citizens. Hence, it might be argued that the term "caste" would be more appropriate when applied to the Negro people of the United States (regardless of phenotype, and including those "Negroes" who are sociologically identified with the Negro people even if their physical appearance is demonstrably Caucasian) than when applied to the peoples of Latin America.

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Next to the agricultural system, the state of education in the republic probably had as much to do as anything with fixing the caste system upon Haiti. So long as the mass of people were not only black but illiterate as well, they would have no means of reaching a social status beyond the one in which they existed. Certainly the aspiring Negroes would not wish to enlighten them, for to stir up the whole people would destroy the very possibility of distinction. As W. S. Gilbert puts it, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Public education, consequently, hardly advanced a step during Boyer's twenty-five years. It had had a feeble enough beginning under Pétion and remained, as it had been, a prerogative of the well-to-do.[a]

Under the complaisant rule of Boyer, accordingly, the people of color came to regard themselves as the unquestioned élite. Their claim was shared, though not always acknowledged, by a small number of blacks (mostly from the North) who had been ancien libres in colonial Saint-Domingue or noblemen under Christophe; who were literate, or whose wealth and ambition attracted attention. Boyer's boast that "all the feelings and prejudices, either of olden times or of national origin, have been superseded by an intense patriotism" was pure buncombe, as he certainly knew.

If only the best brains of the colored group had been content to serve the government, Haiti might have profited from her situation; but lesser government offices were merely springboards for foreign trade in coffee and mahogany, or for the manipulation of business deals. Not "intense patriotism," as Boyer liked to think, but financial gain was the motivating force of the élite, as it had been from colonial times. The man who could amass a modest fortune, so that his children might be educated and their security assured, had done his duty, and he would have been regarded as quixotic to renounce business opportunities for the dubious honor of minor political office. As a consequence of this natural search for gain, the government during Boyer's administration became less and less efficient. Relatives of élite businessmen were given posts because the President could not afford to offend important families. These minor officials then performed their duties awkwardly, or neglected them, in "the unfailing obliquity of dullness."

Skin color became the obsession of high society. Those who had no other merit of which to boast could still revel in their complex-

a. See chap. XVI.

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175 563 564 [78] ions. Intermarriages between persons of widely different color became extremely rare, being regarded by many lighter Haitians with actual disgust. Everyone with social pretensions wanted to be whiter. Dr. Brown stated it baldly: "The pure negro seeks to ally himself to the griffe,[59] the griffe to the mulatto, the mulatto to the quateroon, the latter to a mustif, and the mustif, having but an untraceable tinge of African blood in his organization, is uproariously indignant if he is accused of having any at all."[60] An educated young black of several generations of free parents was scornfully turned down by a lighter-skinned woman considerably his inferior in breeding and wealth because her children would be darker than herself—"*petits enfants griffes*," as she put it. The prejudices of colored people against blacks was almost as great, if not quite as intense, as the former prejudice of whites against colored people in colonial times. No one forgot that there had been black as well as colored freedmen in the colony; but it was much simpler for people of color to claim their long career as élite than for blacks to do so.

The attitude of upper-class Haitians toward whites in the midst of all this color prejudice was an interesting mixture. On the one hand, all good Haitians professed to dread a return of the whites; on the other, they welcomed white businessmen in the country. In a certain respect the whites were regarded much as were the Jews of Europe [673] in the Middle Ages: they were wealthy—and therefore legitimate [671] objects of pillage, necessary evils for the sake of finance. Theft from a [641] white man by government action was a service to the state. Laws were consequently varied from time to time with the sole purpose of profiting from a foreigner's position. True, the trader might protest [423] to his home government, but if England or the United States took a strong stand, Haiti could always retreat; if those governments did not stand firm, Haiti had gained. In the Haitian courts the whites had little show, for Article 38 of the Constitution forbade them to own real estate or to become citizens; they might not even hold a lease for more than ten years; and they might not marry Haitian women.

Nevertheless, the analogy with mediaeval Jews falls down at one vital point: whites were not viewed with contempt. Quite the con-

[192] 59. A term denoting those parts in four of Negro blood. This term as well as "mustif" goes back to colonial white society; neither was, or is, used by cultivated Haitians.

60. Brown, *op. cit.*, II, 283–284.

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trary; they were grudgingly respected as superior beings, arbiters of the fate of the outside world, potential destroyers of the privileges of the Haitian élite should they return to the country in force. Although white men might not legally marry Haitian women, it was not every woman who could resist the opportunity of having children lighter than herself. One indication of the ambiguous attitude toward the whites was seen in religion. In 1842 out of sixty or seventy Roman Catholic priests in the island, only one was a Haitian. Many people in the country were well educated, and certainly more than equals in point of scholarship and *savoir-faire* of the rude priests imported generally from Corsica. But a feeling was current among the peasants that "colored baptism will not stick." There is no indication that the European priests, since they were well paid for their services, attacked this particular heresy. As for the élite, they derived a certain satisfaction in being served by white priests. Aside from the churchmen, however, the only white man in any place of prominence in the country was the mayor of Saint-Marc, whose father had befriended Boyer in former times.

Few visitors had kind words to say of social conditions in the Haiti of Boyer. As a Frenchman put it:

> Democracy was the rule; but what a democracy! A hodge-podge of the most heterogeneous ideas, an alliance of the most contrary principles, of American federalism with military control; the sovereignty of the people replaced by the sovereignty of a ruling clique; and finally, all the intellectual vainglory of a people young, inexperienced, and for a long time denied the legitimate manifestation of their own wishes. Added to all these inconsistencies is the antagonism of races.[61]

This antagonism was, indeed, paramount. The habitual hauteur and assumed pretensions of the lighter Haitians were a perpetual thorn in the flesh of the ambitious blacks, and thus the breach was everywhere widened and made permanent. The blacks retaliated against these distinctions by refusing to obey orders from mulattoes in office, or by petty outrages against private citizens among the colored group.

The vital lack of the country, assuming that stability is desirable, was a middle class of any sort. On the base of hundreds of thousands of peasants, illiterate, unambitious, indifferent to progress, was built

61. Lepelletier de Saint-Remy, "La République d'Haïti: ses dernières révolutions; sa situation actuelle," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XV, No. 4 (Nov., 1843), pp. 681–682.

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"empire" tottered to economic ruin. Graft, default on the debt, increasing deficits, and debased currency were the order of the day, and so continued until 1859, when the accumulation of anger over the useless wars and the humiliating defeats made the Emperor so unpopular that a new and more carefully planned revolution accomplished his downfall. 175 643 652 669

Fifteen years of administration by Negro rulers had broken the political power of the colored élite. Only three light-skinned men became president thereafter until the occupation of Haiti by the American Marines in 1915; in the seventy-two years following Boyer's downfall, mulattoes ruled during only eight. The army under a black general was too powerful, a colored president too hampered by suspicion, to make the political game worth the candle. The colored élite, therefore, adapted themselves to existing conditions as best they could, controlling the business life of Haiti, filling the law offices and, because of their literacy, the secretaryships of state, and indulging in honorific cultural pursuits. 175 643 178 564

In the years after Soulouque the basic realities of Haitian life were changed hardly at all by shifting political administrations. Some of the presidents were mildly progressive, many were indifferent; still more were actually harmful; but the lives of the mass of peasants were not often touched by presidential vagaries. Politics was an affair almost wholly of townspeople, of the army, the élite, and the pseudo-élite. Revolutions, counterrevolutions, movements of reform, international tangles, financial woes, and most of the other complications to which unstable states are heir, absorbed the attention of rulers and upper-class folk who were politically inclined. 175 643 66

Constitutions were made by presidents and changed by their successors; the Senate passed contradictory laws in the same session if the chief executive so recommended; the courts were presided over by the president's men. Haitian law in the latter half of the nineteenth century was what the president's immediate strength and wish made it—or else it was folk custom, undisturbed by the rulers. 175 642 671 692

Never once, in the three quarters of a century after Boyer's time, did Haiti approach the high standard of production known in colonial days or in the early years of independence. The pattern of Haitian social and economic life became fixed in this seventy-five years. Haiti became a country of small-scale tillage by a peasant population, with only enough external trade to provide moderate 175 178 433 565 439

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In most countries in which Westerners are familiar, social distinctions take the form of classes, which are to a greater or less degree mutable. In Haiti, as we have repeatedly indicated, the distinctions are so rigid that *caste* is the only properly descriptive term. There is hardly a Haitian who would not be able to state immediately whether he or any person he knew was, or was not, élite. So it has been with steady persistence ever since Dessalines and Christophe gave way to Pétion and Boyer. Élite youth marries élite girl, and the folkways of the group are passed on from parent to children, thus perpetuating the distinctions. In the pages which follow, all the marks of separation of castes will be examined: religion, economic occupation, marriage, language, manners, and the rest.

Certain aspects of the classic example of the caste system, seen in India, are lacking in Haiti. Religion, for instance, does not require caste endogamy, nor does civil law implicitly acknowledge caste lines by reference to the rights of people of a certain occupation. Custom does more than religion and law could, however, to enforce conformity to the understood rules. Probably the most open efforts to enact caste lines into law were the pronouncements of Dessalines and Christophe that all but a few people should be bound to the soil; and Boyer's Code Rural—a feeble echo of days gone by. The two black rulers were able to enforce the distinctions they made; but when they died their feudal arrangements lapsed, while the separation of classes continued. With the recurrence of revolutions after 1843 it behooved the élite, when occasionally they were in authority, not to lay themselves open to fresh attack upon grounds of aristocratic presumption, for they never knew when they might need the support of the masses. Any black revolutionary leader would have been able to turn an enacted caste law to his own ends, even if a Senate consisting predominantly of light-colored men had had the power to enact such a law. Time and inertia won the battle for the élite. By not joining issue with the masses at any definite point, the aristocrats gained their end of caste distinction, for they were willing to endure the self-discipline necessary to the maintenance of social standards, as the masses were not.

Just as in colonial days the ambition of the well-to-do freedman was to go to France for his education and his holidays, so in free Haiti the lure of France has continued to be strong for the aristocrat. There is not a trace of animosity against the country which enslaved the Negroes, and which in 1802–3 tried by trickery to take away the

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rights of people of Negro blood. As a distinguished Haitian remarked, "It is from France that we draw our culture, our language, our literature, our attitudes of mind: why should we not love her?" The more time the élite spend in France, the less kinship they feel with the masses. There is not necessarily any conscious snobbery in this increasing discrepancy; it simply results from a life spent in entirely different environments. The Boston Brahmin, for example, may be kindhearted and yet feel little kinship with a Mississippi share-cropper.

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Inside the castes one may find social distinctions familiar in democracies. There are well-to-do élite who set the standards of manners and entertainment, and there are peasant landholders who through force of personality dominate their rural neighborhoods. The intellectual man of the upper classes stands somewhat apart from the social whirl of "high society." An important government official has more prestige among the leisured classes than a small businessman, just as a powerful religious adept is more honored among the peasants than a happy-go-lucky ragamuffin. It is obvious, however, that within the élite caste social discrimination occurs more frequently and is more accurately observed than among the country people.

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Such phrases as "Haitian religion" or "Haitian public opinion" are accurate only in so far as the person who uses them defines the adjective "Haitian." One might describe truly a phenomenon characteristic of ninety-five out of a hundred Haitians and yet, in the opinion of those who dominate the economic, political, and social life, do injustice to Haiti.